



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Report by OSCE Head of Mission to Georgia

As delivered by Deputy Representative Douglas Davidson
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
April 1, 2004

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I should like to welcome Ambassador Reeve back to the Permanent Council today and to thank him for his very comprehensive report.

Despite his comprehensiveness however, Ambassador Reeve appears to have omitted something important from his report, he seems to have modestly glossed over the striking accomplishments of the OSCE Mission in Georgia over the past five months in the field of elections. In that time, the mission has helped the Georgian government organize and run three national elections, each one receiving progressively higher marks from international observers. The last two elections had to be scheduled on short notice, making the job that much more difficult.

Undaunted by these time constraints, Ambassador Reeve and his staff performed most impressively and we should like to extend our hardest congratulations to them for a job very well done.

It is clear from the tone of his report that Ambassador Reeve recognizes that now is not the time to rest on his laurels or that of his Mission, but to take advantage of a whole new scenario in Georgia that six months ago would have been unimaginable.

With a new President and a newly elected parliament, now is the time to move forward on the many challenges facing Georgia: attacking corruption, creating a more professional police force that respects human rights, continuing to reform the electoral system, supporting the rule of law and protection of essential freedoms, including religious freedom, improving the living standards of the Georgian people, and resolving the Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts.

This organization, of course, has a special interest in Georgia's efforts, with Russia, to resolve remaining 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit commitments relating to the Russian military presence.

These challenges are enormous, and while it is up to the new Georgian government to tackle them, the international community must stand ready to help. The OSCE will have an important role to play in all these areas, and Ambassador Reeve, in consultation with the Georgian government, has laid out a careful plan for addressing many of these issues.

Along these lines, the United States would like to express its support for the Georgian government's request that the OSCE expand its field presence around the country. Regional issues and questions of local governance and economic development outside of the capital are critical to Georgia's overall stability.

The concept paper developed by the OSCE Mission in Georgia is an excellent start. Mr. Chairman, we look forward to early discussion on the next steps.

In closing, I should like once again to congratulate Ambassador Reeve on the remarkable job he and his staff are doing in Georgia. Although we are still in the early chapters in this book, it appears to have the makings of a success story and we wish Ambassador Reeve well in his continuing efforts to contribute to a stable, democratic and prosperous Georgia.

I Thank you.